



News Release

For immediate release: March 17, 2011

(11-042)

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Japan nuclear events after quake pose no health risk in Washington

OLYMPIA — State health officials have seen no increased radiation levels in local air samples after nuclear power plants were damaged in the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Air monitoring continues as a precaution, though no public health risks are expected in Washington due to the events in Japan.

Although the situation at Japan's crippled nuclear power plants continues to change, the risk to Washington has not.

"Dangerous levels of radiation are not expected to reach Washington," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "The tragic events in Japan don't pose a radiation exposure risk to people in our state. And we urge people not to take potassium iodide or iodine pills; it's unnecessary and could be harmful to some people."

Potassium iodide, also known as KI, is only needed by people who must work in or around nuclear power plants during an emergency, or who live nearby and cannot evacuate. KI should not be taken by anyone in Washington because of the events in Japan.

Public health, meteorology, and radiation experts continue to make that point. Because Japan is so far away, radiation would be diluted before reaching our state and levels would be so low no protective action, including iodine and other supplements, is necessary.

Dr. Cliff Mass of the University of Washington, professor in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences, has been following the situation in Japan. "There's little chance that a significant radiation threat exists for the Pacific Northwest from the Japanese reactor problems," he said.

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“Normal atmospheric mixing, radioactive decay, wash-out of particles, and settling will insure that concentrations would decline to very small amounts, even if highly favorable trajectories existed at the time of any major release,” Mass concludes.

State health officials provide additional information on the [agency Newsroom page](#) (www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/japan2011.htm), which is updated daily.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health website at http://www.doh.wa.gov for <i>a healthy dose of information</i> .
